

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0325

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PPID
SUBJECT: SENIOR PRIANESE DISSIDENTS IN PORT MORESBY

1. SUMMARY: TWO RELATIVELY SENIOR MEMBERS OF JACOB PRAI'S OPM HAVE BEEN JAILED IN PORT MORESBY FOR ILLEGALLY ENTERING PAPUA NEW GUINEA. GPNG HAS ESTABLISHED POLICY OF BRIEF DETENTIONS OF ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSERS PRIOR TO LOOKING AT POSSIBILITY OF ASYLUM. HOWEVER, POLICY REGARDING PRESS ACCESS TO SUCH PRISONERS OR TO WEST IRIAN BORDER AREA APPARENTLY STILL SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE DISAGREEMENT AND DEBATE WITHIN GPNG WHICH CONSTANTLY WALKING TIGHTROPE BETWEEN PUBLIC SYMPATHY WITH WEST IRIAN DISSIDENTS AND ITS NEED TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDONESIA. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A NEWS PROGRAM ALSO CARRIED BY PNG'S NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMMISSION, RADIO AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCED ON CONFIDENTIAL

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FEBRUARY 26 THAT TWO SENIOR WEST IRIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT (OPM) MEMBERS HAD ARRIVED IN PORT MORESBY SEEKING ASYLUM. QUESTIONED IN PARLIAMENT A DAY LATER FONMIN OLEWALE ADMITTED THAT TWO OF OPM LEADER JACOB PRAI'S SENIOR PEOPLE HAD LEFT "PRAI'S ARMY" THE PREVIOUS WEEK, HAD CROSSED THE BORDER AND HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO PORT MORESBY WHERE THEY HAD BEEN JAILED AS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS. THE TWO WERE LATER

IDENTIFIED AS DARIUS MAURY, DEPUTY TO PRAI, AND AMOS INDAY,
AN ADVISOR.

3. ASKED IF THE TWO WOULD BE GRANTED ASYLUM, OLEWALE REPLIED,
"...WHEN THEIR SENTENCE IS OVER THEM WE WILL DECIDE ON THE
MERITS OF THEIR CASE WHETHER THEY CAN BE GIVEN POLITICAL
ASYLUM OR NOT."

4. THE CASE CAME TO PUBLIC ATTENTION AGAIN ON MARCH 1 WHEN
OLEWALE AND CORRECTIVE INSTITUTIONS MINISTER ROONEY
AUTHORIZED THE PRESS TO INTERVIEW THE TWO PRISONERS.
ARRIVING AT THE JAIL, THE PRESS WAS TURNED AWAY WHEN A JAIL
OFFICER SAID INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE HAD TOLD THE PRISONERS NOT TO TALK AND TOLD JAIL
AUTHORITIES THAT INTERVIEWS HAD NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY
OLEWALE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD PRESS THAT
IF WHAT JAIL OFFICIALS SAID WAS CORRECT, HEADS WOULD ROLL
AS THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOTHING TO HIDE AND WANTS THE WORLD
TO KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING.

5. COMMENT: BRIEF DETENTIONS OF ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSERS
AND SUBSEQUENT DECISION RE ASYLUM IS WELL-ESTABLISHED
GPNG POLICY. HOWEVER, POLICY WITH RESPECT TO PRESS
ACCESS TO WEST IRIANS APPARENTLY SUBJECT TO CONSIDERABLE
DIFFERENCES WITHIN GPNG. EMBOFF CALLED DFAT DEPUTY
SECRETARY MORNING AFTER RADIO AUSTRALIA BROADCAST TO ASK
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IF GOVERNMENT WOULD ISSUE A STATEMENT. DEPSEC SEEMED
STARTLED TO HEAR NEWS HAD LEAKED AND THEN ADDED, "I
SUPPOSE THERE WILL BE A STATEMENT." QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT
FOLLOWED FEW HOURS LATER AND ISSUE WAS IN OPEN. DIFFERENCES
WITHIN GOVERNMENT WERE APPARENT IN HANDLING OF ABORTED
PRESS INTERVIEW MARCH 1. ALSO, PNG DEFENCE FORCE COMMANDER
DIRO TOLD EMBOFF FEBRUARY 28 THAT HE HAD URGED OLEWALE TO
GRANT AUSTRALIAN MEDIA ACCESS NOT ONLY TO TWO IRIANESE
HERE BUT ALSO TO BORDER AREA. DIRO SAID HE BELIEVED IT IM-
PORTANT FOR GOA TO MAINTAIN CURRENT POSITIVE ATTITUDE
TOWARDS PNG AND THAT THAT ATTITUDE WOULD BE STRENGTHENED
IF AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC WERE KEPT INFORMED. ACCORDING TO DIRO,
OLEWALE AGREED TO ACCESS HERE BUT ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO VISITS
TO BORDER AREA.

6. ANYTHING INVOLVING IRIAN JAYA QUESTION IS OF GREATEST
IMPORTANCE TO GPNG WHICH MUST BALANCE PEOPLE'S SYMPATHIES
WITH WEST IRIANS AGAINST NECESSITY TO MAINTAIN BOTH
CREDIBILITY AND GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDONESIANS.
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